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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6887
INFO RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0723
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0683
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 1741
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 000707

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ELA, NEA/FO, EEB/EX, EEB/ESC/TFS, L/EB
COMMERCE FOR BIS/SONDERMAN/CHRISTINO
NSC FOR SHAPIRO/MCDERMOTT
TREASURY FOR HAJJAR/CURTIN
PARIS FOR NOBLES
LONDON FOR LORD
JERUSALEM FOR KAPLAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/01/2019
TAGS: [ECIN](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: ALEPPO CONTACTS CRITICIZE SANCTIONS, SEEK CLOSER
COOPERATION

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Chuck Hunter for reasons 1.4(b,d)

Summary

1. (SBU) CDA, Consul General, and embassy staff visited Aleppo September 27-28 to meet with area wardens and local businessmen and attend a ceremony marking the inauguration of the Ein al-Tal Refugee Camp. The UNRWA-sponsored event marked the completion of Phase 1 of the Neirab Palestinian Refugee Camp Rehabilitation Project. The response to the CDA's visit was overwhelmingly positive and emphasized the importance of maintaining a focused attention on issues confronting Syrians outside of Damascus. End summary.

CDA and Consul General Hold Reception in Aleppo

2. (SBU) CDA, Consul General, and embassy staff traveled to Aleppo September 27 to meet with area wardens and local business contacts. An evening reception provided a venue to introduce the CDA and other newly arrived staff to wardens living in northern Syria as well as engage with businessmen from the Aleppo area. CDA's visit was very well received. The approximately 50 reception attendees were excited to have the opportunity to discuss issues affecting northern Syria with both the Charge and Consul General.

3. (SBU) A group of Aleppo area businessmen, led by Hassan Zeno, Hassan M. Assil and Dr. Walid Al Hassen, all dual U.S.-Syrian citizens, discussed their desire to form an "American Business Group" and/or a Syrian/American Chamber of Commerce in Aleppo. The American Business Group would be modeled on the American Business Group in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E., of which Dr. Hassen is a member. The purpose of the group would be to address issues affecting American businessmen living and working in Syria, particularly the difficulties of doing business under the current U.S. sanctions regime.

4. (C) Dr. Hasan Ahmad Zeido, President of the Aleppo Chamber of Commerce, criticized U.S. economic sanctions against Syria. He also expressed a desire for greater economic cooperation between the U.S. and Syria. Zeido, and many

others, expressed frustration concerning the effect sanctions are having on their businesses. Emboff discussed the current situation regarding U.S. sanctions against Syria with the attendees and promised to keep them updated with any changes that occur in the sanctions regime.

Ein al-Tal Palestinian Refugee Camp Inauguration

15. (SBU) As reported septel, CDA participated in the inauguration of the new Ein al-Tal Palestinian Refugee Camp near Aleppo on September 28 as one of several "Opening Remarks" speakers. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)-sponsored event highlighted the USG's nearly \$3 million of assistance to the Neirab Palestinian Refugee Camp Rehabilitation Project. Construction of the Ein al-Tal Camp was Phase 1 of the Neirab project. First Lady Asma al-Asad attended the event.

Former U.S. Consulate in Aleppo

16. (C) Prior to departure, CDA toured the compound of the former U.S. consulate in Aleppo. The former U.S. consulate property, which is still owned by the U.S. government, has sat idle since being attacked and burned in 1967. The property has been well maintained and remains in pristine condition structurally despite cosmetic interior damage due to the fire. Disposition of the property will be a subject of discussion with the OIG team due to arrive in Damascus on

October 22.
HUNTER